United Nations A/60/950

General Assembly

Distr.: General
21 July 2006

Original: English

Sixtieth session
Agenda items 42 and 43

Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations

Culture of peace

Letter dated 17 July 2006 from the Permanent Representatives of Cyprus and Malaysia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Recent international developments make it all the more urgent to lend interfaith and intercultural dialogue our full attention and support. In this regard, as co-hosts of the Second Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) Interfaith Dialogue, held in Larnaca, Cyprus, from 3 to 5 July 2006, we have the honour to transmit herewith the Larnaca Action Plan on Interfaith Understanding and Cooperation for a Peaceful World (see annex).

We would be grateful if the text of the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 42 and 43.

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Ambassador
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Annex to the letter dated 17 July 2006 from the Permanent Representatives of Cyprus and Malaysia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

We, the representatives of ASEM partners, who gathered at the Second ASEM Interfaith Dialogue in Larnaca, Cyprus, from 3 to 5 July 2006,

- Reaffirming the Bali Declaration on Building Interfaith Harmony within the International Community
- Having discussed best practices in promoting interfaith understanding in the field of education, culture and the media, as well as religion and society
- Having examined proposals to consolidate further interfaith harmony at the local, national, bilateral, regional and international levels, and also taking into account initiatives such as the United Nations initiative on the alliance of civilizations;

Have decided to work towards the implementation of the following:

In the field of interfaith understanding

- Setting up a working group of experts from ASEM partners, tasked with putting forward a set of proposals for incorporation of basic knowledge of world religions and of the common ethical standards and moral values shared by the different faiths in national educational curricula, giving due consideration to the specific circumstances of the respective countries.
- Organizing essay competitions among youth in secondary education on the theme of "How religion affects my everyday life". The top five students each from Asia and Europe will be invited to participate at the next ASEM Interfaith Dialogue, where they will have the opportunity to discuss their papers with participants.
- Organizing thematic art exhibitions by artists of both regions on the overall subject of interfaith understanding, such as photo exhibition on religious sites and traditions of a country through the eyes of photographers from other ASEM countries.
- Exploring the possibility of setting up national interfaith dialogue groups.

On the role of media in promoting interfaith dialogue

- Establishing a working group of media professionals and members of faith communities tasked with recommending ways of increasing respect and understanding of each other's perspective and professional approaches, bearing in mind the new context that globalization has created.
- Creating an interactive and inclusive website which will serve as a platform for engaging the members of faith communities and media professionals with an emphasis on attracting the youth, as well as serving as a source of credible information.

- Calling on media organizations to offer internships to young members of faith communities so that they can report back to their communities on their media experience.

On religion and multi-ethnic societies

- Draw on the positive experience of peaceful coexistence and cooperation of multi-ethnic and multi-religious communities and encourage those experiences to help diffuse tensions and build confidence in conflict situations.
- Empowering women to assume a more active role in utilizing the potential of interfaith dialogue to contribute to conflict-prevention, conflict-resolution and peacebuilding.
- Encouraging the development of measures to increase awareness and understanding among people of all faiths and none. Such awareness can be cultivated by way of people-centred activities and people-to-people contacts, including visits to religious sites and places of worship and observation or participation in religious ceremonies.
- Promoting the preservation of religious sites and monuments as vital in creating a positive image of the multi-religious fabric of our societies, leading to acceptance and respect.
- Facilitating the placement of students of exchange programmes with foster families of different faiths, cultures and ethnicities in order to enrich the interaction for mutual benefit.

In order to ensure a timely and effective implementation of the Action Plan, the two co-hosts of the Larnaca Interfaith Dialogue undertake to find the appropriate modalities, in consultation with the co-sponsors and all other ASEM partners.

We congratulate Cyprus for hosting, together with Malaysia, this Second ASEM Interfaith Dialogue, thus paving the way for making the Interfaith Dialogue an annual ASEM process. We thank all co-sponsors, namely Austria, Belgium, China, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Greece, Indonesia, Ireland, the Netherlands, the Philippines, Portugal, the Republic of Korea, Singapore, Spain, Thailand and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and all other participants for their contribution to the success of the Larnaca Dialogue.

We also appreciate the added value of the contribution by the Asia-Europe Foundation in furthering biregional dialogue between cultures and civilizations and fostering exchanges among media professionals and other civil society representatives.

We recognize the need to ensure continuity in the ASEM Interfaith Dialogue and build on progress in implementing this Action Plan. In this respect, we welcome the offer of China to host, together with Italy, the third ASEM interfaith Dialogue in 2007.